Form-Making: A Figure Space Report by Margit Galanter

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As so many of us have faced, it is nearly impossible – or in other words, a very fine art – to translate lived experience into language. Yet, this act is somehow nectar. What is more satisfying: accessing the sentences that get close to the mysteries of life as they unfold, or to be engaged in the act of trying? And how does this project of transducing compare to just doing the thing in real time and space, itself?

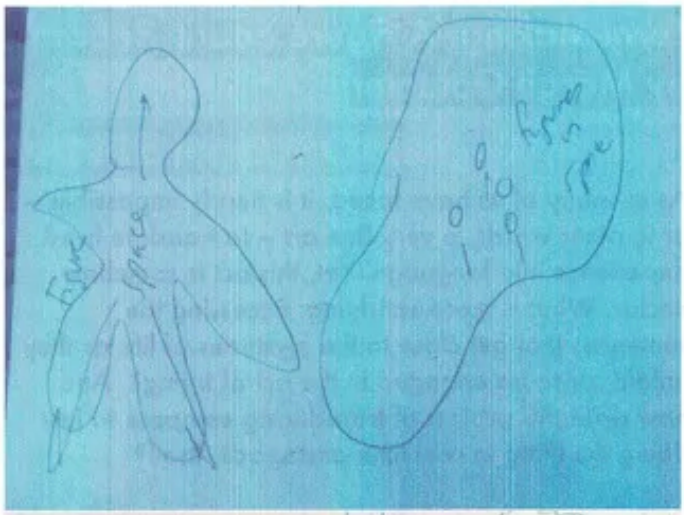
Making language is collaborative, syncretic. And yeah, language comes in many forms.

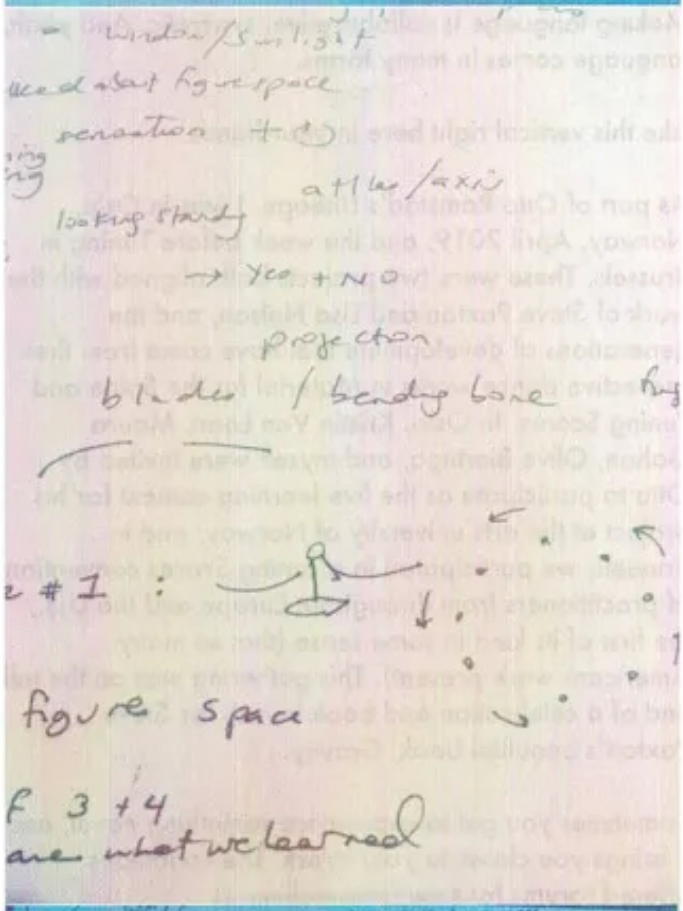
Like this vertical right here in your hands.

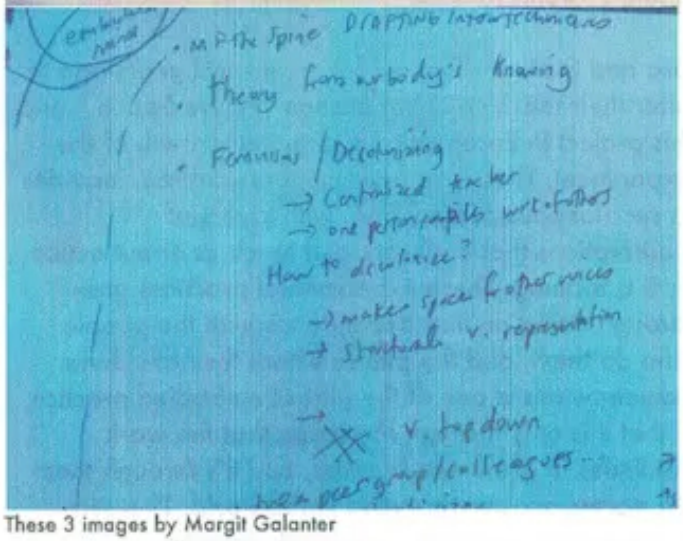
As part of Otto Ramstad's *Lineage*, I was in Oslo, Norway, April 2019, and the week before Tuning in Brussels. These were two projects both aligned with the work of Steve Paxton and Lisa Nelson, and the generations of development that have come from their respective dance works in Material for the Spine and Tuning Scores. In Oslo, Kristin Van Loon, Maura Gahan, Olive Bieringa, and myself were invited by Otto to participate as the live learning context for his project at the arts university of Norway; and in Brussels, we participated in a Tuning Scores convention of practitioners from throughout Europe and the U.S., the first of its kind in some sense (that so many Americans were present). This gathering was on the tail end of a celebration and book launch for Steve Paxton's beautiful book, *Gravity*.

Sometimes you get to experience something novel, and it brings you closer to your Work. The conditions offered forums for new form-making.

Lisa and Steve had joined forces several years ago to offer their teaching collaboration "Figure Space," and this project in Europe was a direct outgrowth of the experiment. These are movement researches, inquiries in spontaneous composition, with layers of observations that explicate and teach us about action as it is forming. These experimental practices grow through doing, in interdependence with the people who do them, and the places where they are done. Somehow this is one of the gifts of embodied practice, – that it is only *through the doing* that the work continues to grow and breathe, and it's through them we access our own growing in the world. They are living systems that are contextually located.







These 3 images by Margit Galanter

In Brussels, there is a group that meets regularly and has adopted a chance-based, non-facilitative method for Tuning; they roll a die, and with their pre-determined six tuning score options, one is "chosen", and they practice it for three hours. We all gathered from multiple countries and first languages, and found a surprising ease entering into practice together. We were based at the new and visionary TicTac space, a massive studio, courtyard, cafe, rest spaces, and resident housing. On Sunday, we wrote scores on pieces of paper, and in smaller groups, went for it > we dove into chance. In my smaller group, there was a lively mix of set and unset, as we created our own warm-up, and then practiced the score "Go." We chose colored pencils to use as similar objects, and in a small image space we made single movement propositions with our pencils (pencil-body-beings-in-place). We watched how the score stayed its course, and where it expanded through the cumulative nature of time and desires. Tuning is a score that grows from sensations, opinions, and appetites, enacted and made explicit through our individual and "collective measuring" (Charlie Morrissey, UK). What was so salient was how having a shared practice enabled us both to move together as a large group, and also have tools to decide how to proceed, – context, content and form, all expressed through Tuning.

In Oslo, so much. Teaching beautiful BA students and community dancers, practicing scores of our own collective creation in "Open Studio" time in Otto's installation, watching his performance many many times and finding more layers, the vagaries and learning of collective decision-making.

With the BA students, working with an academic context, I offered Material for the Spine as a source for growing language from our body's knowing. I facilitated formal, bodily, sensorial practice in MFS as a jumping point for creating ideas. The flows and directionalities in the imaging of MFS attenuate us to the sensation of lines and flow, which in turn brings forth a capacity to form language and thought. We worked off of Steve's phrasing: "Drafting Interior Techniques." We alternated between movement action and writing, talking, and from it some new language emerged, and the space supported the conservatory students to access their own inquiries.

Over a weekend, Kristin, Maura, and I co-taught through the organization PRAXIS, - we were to explore different facets of *Figure Space*. I was lucky to teach after the other two, to be in response to their unique ways of bringing these materials together - a symphony

of tones. It was Sunday morning. The group was much smaller at first, then grew. We invoked a dojo, epigenetically. I wanted to work off of what had been offered, to give a sense of *practice* and at the same time offer from my own mixing. The class was a meditation on "figure" "space" and "figure space" - we found these, we blurred them, we clarified them, all through the action of the materials of rolling, intentional eye movements, warm-up exercises, tuning practices > tuning the techniques and puzzling the senses. A highlight was doing Puzzle #1 in a big circle, feeling the larger circulation pattern as each person circled around themself. We found softening in our movement and the environment through sensing as we moved.

The workshop at Praxis in Oslo. Image by Margit Galanter

From the book *Interdependence: Biology and Beyond:* "There is no peeking at the world independent of perceptions" (Kriti Sharma). The whole idea that *it depends* > that there is an *it* that depends > that it *depends;* our senses evolve through our actions, the forms grow through our approximations, there is nothing unitary, we are the multitudes, we are always changing, and we are literally *in interaction*. These forms are growing through our actions, and everything we touch changes us.

So with this, what is a line? A line of thought, a projection, a proposition. A shape, a form, a pattern? How are the many ways we make by following our fascinations? And in turn, breathing new forms.....